

regard for the welfare of the country and the welfare of this parliament. If I say things that may sound biased it is entirely through my desire to see things improve in this country.

● (1552)

The first thing I want to bring to the attention of hon. members is a rather novel departure in procedure in connection with the committee hearing in question which produced its fifth report. As this was a committee charged with responsibility by this House to look at the question of freedom of information it was decided that our session, in drafting the report, would be held in public. This was not challenged. It was the view of members on all sides of this House and of the other place that the meeting was an open meeting. Members of the press were present. I recommend this suggestion to other committees dealing with issues involved in drafting reports.

In this House we sit in public in committee of the whole. We have just finished dealing with a bill in committee of the whole. I think it is important that the public know precisely what the views are of hon. members, whether they are voting for or against the bill in general, and on particular issues. However, I do say that there may be occasions when it is essential for hearings to be held in camera. It would be desirable, with the kind of climate that now exists, for more committees to follow the example which we have set. We did set it with some trepidation. However it worked out very well. As well it was quite an accommodation to members on all sides of the House. Their positions are public by the fact that their voting was public.

Members on both sides and from both Houses almost unanimously were in favour of this report, with one or two variations. It represents an attitude of the House of Commons and the Senate. Hopefully it may yet be the position of the government. I see the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) over there, sphynx-like. He is engaged in drafting legislation, I understand.

Subsequent to the passing of this fifth report, its tabling and filing, I and other members of the committee have received recommendations, and positions have been stated by some 40 or 50 organizations—I am sure the Secretary of State has received them as well—highly recommending the stand taken by this committee. I hope the Secretary of State and the government in drafting legislation, will largely follow the recommendations of the committee. I look forward to this being mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

In bringing this report forward we are in a way complying with the urgings of the Secretary of State. He has had this matter under his responsibility for some time. He has been urging us to do something about it so that he might have the benefit of our advice. He now has that before him. It is virtually a unanimous report, and I hope that 99.9 per cent of those recommendations will find their way into the bill which is probably being considered by his experts at this time.

It is a particularly useful time to consider this. Recently a situation was brought to my attention and to the attention of this House by the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis)

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where the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) made an obvious attempt to hobble, frustrate and inhibit the workings of the royal commission which is inquiring into the conduct of the Mounted Police at this very critical stage. The commission will now engage itself in finding out the extent to which the government and members of the government were aware of what was going on, were party to what was going on, may even have recommended some of the things that went on, and certainly were privy to the information shortly afterwards.

We are now looking squarely at the government as to the question of whether there is culpability on its part. I think that the public are entitled to know this. Here we find a Solicitor General with unmitigated gall engaging in the very dangerous conduct of instructing his counsel to appear before the royal commission, not only as my hon. friend from Perth-Wilmot said, to make propositions which are entirely contrary to what we understood and what I think were quite plainly the original intentions of the course that the government was going to take with regard to the question of government information, but going even further, and I am now reading from the *Ottawa Citizen* of October 5. It refers to Mr. Joseph Nuss who represented the Solicitor General. The article reads:

The lawyer cited the Human Rights Act, the bill now before parliament to establish the office of ombudsman, and the green paper on public access to government documents, now before a joint Commons-Senate committee, to show there are recognized exceptions to the disclosure principle.

This is the sort of conduct which we have been expecting from this mobile disaster who occupies the position of Solicitor General. He is suggesting that merely because there is a bill before the House, once the government has brought a bill down, as his counsel suggests about the ombudsman bill, that is then holy writ, that has all the earmarks of divine writ, it must be binding upon this House, and he wants it to be binding upon the McDonald royal commission.

We now turn to the green paper. Parts of the green paper were good, and I have already commended the Secretary of State in that respect. Parts are very bad and will have to be substantially altered. The green paper is simply a document put out by a government making certain proposals to be considered by parliament. I think it is just unmitigated gall for the Solicitor General to instruct his counsel to say that the material contained in this green paper must be accepted by the royal commission as being within the words used by his counsel, "a recognized exception to the disclosure principle".

I will not have time, Mr. Speaker, nor do I intend to even if I did have, to go into all the details of the recommendations made by the committee. The committee made it quite plain that they rejected a great many of the proposals for exemptions contained in the green paper. I am sure that that information must have been known to the Solicitor General.

The Solicitor General is a minister of the Crown charged with responsibility in matters of this kind. He must have been aware, or ought to have been aware, of what this committee, composed of members of the other place and members of this House, members who were representing both sides of the House, had said. Despite that, the Solicitor General instructs